Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov – Supplement
Series VIII: Performing Arts • Vol. 8 (57) No. 2 – 2015

The effect of various music genres on the adolescents' emotional state

Mădălina RUCSANDA[1]

Abstract: *The relationship between adolescents' emotional states and the kind of music listened to under the supervision of the teacher allowed us to understand the effectiveness of the listening activities conducted under experimental conditions. In school, when listening to a piece of music, students should be taught by music teachers to discover how feelings and emotions are expressed through that music.*
This paper aims at investigating how, by listening to various music genres (pop, rock, classical, jazz) the adolescents' emotional states are influenced. The results confirmed the hypothesis formulated. Young people's preference for rock and pop was ascertained. The fact that listening to the suggested 4 types of music lowers the affective emotional states can be explained by the fact that listening to music is adolescents' way of relaxing.

Key-words: *music, adolescents, listening activity, emotional states*

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, music has been part of people's lives and the early stage of music is to be found "in the human consciousness - not in the voice, nor in the fingers, not even in hearing, but in the depths of the unfathomable Ego.", because "music is born within the soul and it addresses the soul." (Gagim 2003, 7). Depending on the culture, the level of intellectual and spiritual training, the geographical area and the time period in which they lived, people have expressed various feelings and emotions through music and we can say that it is a barometer for the psychology of a civilization, of a culture. Music has a unique power to generate emotions and be so universal to us (Elliott, 2005; Weinberger, 2004).
There is a relationship between man's inner needs and the emotional side of music, the two of them helping each other, and becoming, alternatively, cause and effect.

Throughout history, various scientists have made important reflections about the nature of music. Philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, musicologists, and neuroscientists have suggested several theories about the origin, the aim and the influence of music on people, and some were based on extensive scientific research. (Fitch, 2006; Peretz, 2006; Levitin, 2007; Schäfer et al., 2010)

[1] Transilvania University of Braşov, m_rucsanda@unitbv.ro

In Romania, the studies made by Professor John Bradu Iamandescu, PhD on the impact of music on the human being are well known, studies which concerned the beneficial effect of music on health, the healing effect of music in various diseases and chronic illnesses, but also in improving the mental performance. In this paper we do not want to resume the already formulated ideas about the importance of music on the mind, but to present how listening to a certain kind of music influences adolescents' positive or negative emotions. We have chosen the ages 16-17 because, as stated by other researchers as well, there is an intensive intellectualization (development of the abstract thinking), an enrichment of the emotional experience and a closeness to the cultural values at this age (Diaconu, 2013)

2. General characteristic of adolescence

Adolescence is the period of most intense changes and most visible effects in appearance, behaviour and internal perception of the outside world (Şchiopu et al., 1997). In this phase, self-education and the desire to improve appear as a reverse to the desire for independence, it is the period when the feelings of responsibility and duty are formed, as an expression of the social self. This period is characterised by an intense maturation on all levels, including sexual, influencing all sensory structures. During adolescence, the reconstitution on new foundations of the personality occurs, it is a period when a gradual development of the identity appears (Coté, 2009), and from the emotional point of view, it is the period when the most obvious transformation takes place, when the passionate feelings are formed (first love, jealousy, hatred). Through the crystallization of the inner life and of the consciousness related to their own identity, by focusing on introspection and insight, analysis or self-analysis, by acquiring the conscience of the maturation and of the aspirations towards being an adult, through the desire to be independent and autonomous, the adolescents form their personality and become responsible individuals, being capable of self-control.

Social integration represents the more aware and more active attachment to the group to which they belong and whose scope extends to the classroom, school, extending to the social integration. As they become older, adolescents are more objective in their judgments. The desire to know the social and cultural values is rigorously expressed.

As (Kistler et al. 2010, 616– 630) have shown that music is a source of social-cognitive rules that influence the development of the self-concept in adolescents. Thus, music is their soundtrack during this period of intense development and can trigger various emotions in them, ranging from joy and ecstasy to rage or violence.

Listening to music is particularly important and omnipresent in adolescents' lives, playing an important role in their development. In this regard, three arguments have been expressed, which can lead to theoretical formulations and extensive

research. The first argument states that music can influence key aspects of an adolescent's development, the second that music can be a protective factor and a risk and the third states that music can serve as an adjunct component in prevention and intervention, which is of particular interest to clinical psychologists and those working in prevention science for adolescents (Dave 2013, 10).

Young people spend much time and invest money in order to listen to their favourite music (Roberts et al., 2009, 314– 344). There are studies which show that, on average, adolescents listen to music for up to three hours per day and in total, throughout the period of adolescence, they accumulate more than 10,000 hours of listening (Roberts et al., 2009; Tarrant et al. 2000, 166– 173; Zillmann et al. 1997, 161–187).

A theory about adolescents' preferences states that generally, they listen to the same kind of music their friends like. (de Nord et al., 2000). Even functional magnetic resonance imaging suggests that adolescents' musical preferences are partly mediated by neural mechanisms (Berns et al., 2010). However, evidence from recent sociometric research shows only a moderate degree of similarity between adolescents' personal musical tastes and those of their friends (Miranda & Claes, 2009). Perhaps by accepting the same kind of music, adolescents can socialize better with their mates or friends and they can develop interpersonal relationships.

There are studies indicating that there is a difference between girls' musical preferences and those of boys. Thus, adolescent girls pay more attention to fulfilling their emotional needs through music, while for adolescent boys finding their social identity is more important (North et al. 2000, 255– 272). On the other hand, in another study, Roberts et al., (1998) reported no differences between the sexes in terms of adolescents' emotional reactions.

Due to other points of view, adolescents feel that music is a resource that can provide for some of their emotional needs, especially in view of emotional adjustment (North et al., 2000; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007) or that they listen to music in order to no longer feel alone (North et al., 2000) or to relieve tension and to distract themselves from worries (Gantz et al. 1978, 81–89). In other words, they use music to cope with stress.

3. Reasons for choosing the topic

We noticed that in contemporary society, the adolescent is tempted to listen to and to promote a music that does not always meet the criteria of aesthetic and moral value, leading to inappropriate behavioural effects. Moreover, there is also a discrepancy between adolescents' and adults' music tastes and preferences, due to specific experiences, as well as due to socio-cultural climate.

Musical tastes include a variety of factors that generate a certain preference and affinity for a certain genre.

Young people listen to a certain music genre because their friends listen to it and very few admit doing this in order to be accepted by others in the group. It is difficult to change the musical preferences and this cannot be done by imposing, as this would naturally lead to a defensive response. Through the listening activities they carry out under the guidance of teachers and through productive discussions on the material heard, young people should be aware of the effect of music on their own behaviour. Both the listening activities and the assessments made on them should encourage young people to reflect.

It is known that at this age adolescents associate a certain type of music heard with the momentary mood, because the predominant tendency is to counteract in any way that which may cause an uncomfortable or depressing emotional state. Because communication between adolescents and parents is often flawed and they may not be able to provide enough guidance or control the music their children listen to, we believe that in school, while listening to a music piece, students should be taught by music teachers how to express their feelings and emotions through music and how to appreciate it.

The music preferred by adolescents can be called cultural consumption and its scope can be expanded through appropriate pedagogical action, because "the education system fulfils the inevitable role of cultural legitimation, converting into legitimate culture" (Bourdieu 1986, 58).

4. Hypothesis

a. Various music genres listened to can influence the adolescents' positive or negative emotions.
b. Adolescents know how to verbally express what feelings are triggered by a certain kind of music.

5. The study sample

The applied research phases were conducted in a general education high school during the school schedule, with the agreement of the headmaster, the class teacher and the pupils. The sample was made up of 50 students from urban area, aged 16 to 17 (out of which 36 girls and 14 boys), all of them having impressive results at school – general averages over 9.

6. Methodology

The study presents the results of a transversal research and the methods used were observation, questionnaire and hearing. The research was conducted in two stages:

- During the first meeting with the children in the study group we provided a questionnaire in which we aimed at: identifying the musical preferences of young people, the daily time spent listening to music, to what extent the suggested pieces are among their musical preferences, why they listen to music or which music genre they listen to, depending on their emotional state: joy, excitement, sadness, anger, whether they play an instrument, for how long and what made them study it.
- For four days, the children in the experimental sample group have listened to the pieces included in the 4 music genres suggested, every day one music genre being scheduled. Every day, children have indicated their affective state both before and after the audition on a piece of paper.

The emotional states aimed at were classified into two categories:

- positive emotions: optimism, cheerfulness, happiness, joy, excitement, enthusiasm.
- negative emotions: sadness, melancholy, anxiety, nervousness, panic.

During the listening activity, the adolescents were asked to write down the feeling triggered by the music, using adjectives, verbal expressions or drawings.

The material used for listening used 4 music genres, as follows:

a. pop: "All about that bass"– Meghan Trainor; "Swagger Jagger"– Cher Lloyd; "Stay with me"– Sam Smith ; "Roar" – Katy Perry; "Really Don't Care"– Demi Lovato.
b. jazz: "At Last" – Etta James; "How High the Moon" – Ella Fitzgerald; "Cry Me a River" – Dinah Washington; "Baby" – Clifford Brown; "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)"– Ella Fitzgerald
c. rock: "Nightmare" – Avenged Sevenfold; "Don't cry" – Guns N' Roses; "Back In Black"– AC/DC; "Paint It Black" – The Rolling Stones; "Fly Away" – Lenny Kravitz
d. classical music: "Spring" – Antonio Vivaldi; "A little serenade - Allegro" – W. A. Mozart; "Fur Elise" – L. van Beethoven; "Dreaming" – Robert Schumann

7. Data interpretation

The results of the questionnaire provided were the following:

- Regarding the adolescents' musical preferences (Fig. 1), the results demonstrate their attraction to pop music (35%), followed by rock (32%), heavy metal (12%), classical music (9%) and jazz (5%).
- Most adolescents - 45% spend between 2 and 3 hours per day listening to music, 23% listen to music between 1and 2 hours, 16% of them listen to music 3 to 4 hours, 12% listen to more than 5 hours of music and 4% spend less than one hour a day listening to music (Fig. 2). We notice that music occupies the free time of a high percentage of those interviewed, and those who allocate less time to it said

they were involved in other activities: practice a sport, outdoor activities or go to karate.

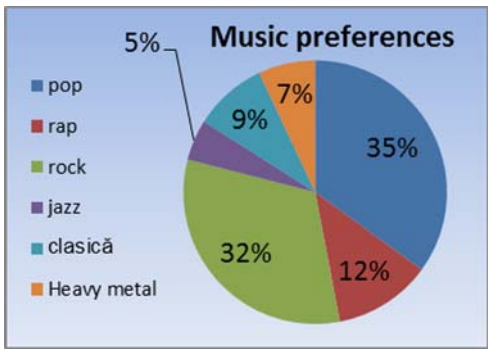

Fig. 1

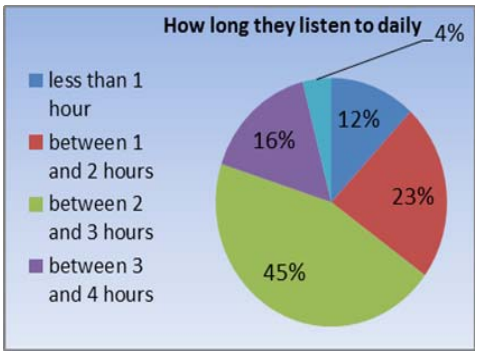

Fig. 2

- Among the pieces suggested for the experiment, 4 out of 5 pop songs, one jazz, 3 rock and 2 pieces of classical music were among the children's preferences. The adolescents confessed that they also listened to their favourite pop and rock songs when partying or clubbing with friends.
- When asked "Why do you listen to music?", the responses were varied: "I listen to music because it makes me feel good," "I do not feel alone anymore", "music helps me learn", "music relaxes me", " music helps me think about what I want to become", ”it helps me calm down when I'm angry," "it helps me socialize with friends", "we have fun with music."
- In terms of achieving a correlation between the music they listen to and the emotional state they have at that moment, we noticed that (fig. 3):
  - when they feel **cheerful**: 37% listen to pop music, 23% to rock, 15% listen to heavy metal, 12% listen to rap music, 8% listen to classical music and 5% listen to jazz.
  - when they are in a state of **enthusiasm**: 41% listen to pop music, 15% to rock or heavy metal, 10% listen to rap music, 9% to classical music and 10% listen to jazz;
  - when they feel **sadness:** 24% listen to pop music, 33% to rock, 0% listen to heavy metal, 23% listen to rap music, 14% to classical music and 10% listen to jazz;
  - when they have feeling of **melancholy**: 34% listen to pop music, 23% to rock, 0% listen to heavy metal, 24% listen to rap music, 13% listen to classical music and 6% listen to jazz;
  - when they are in a state of **rage**: 13% listen to pop music, 24% to rock, 42% listen to heavy metal, 18% listen to rap music, 3% to classical music and 0% listen to jazz;

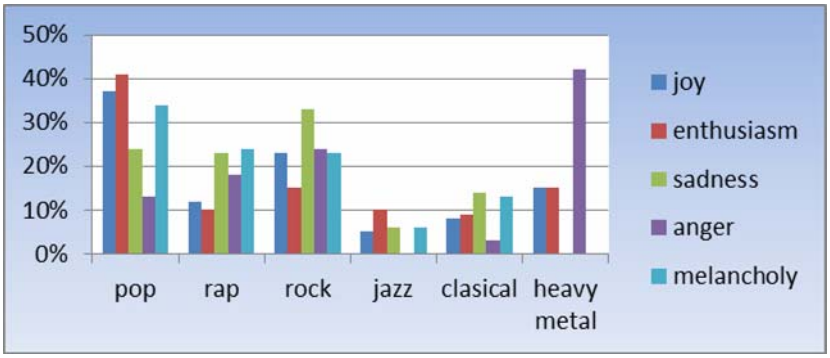

Fig. 3

It can be noticed that the emotional processes – joy and enthusiasm have similar values, which means that when they feel positive affective states, most adolescents listen to pop and rock music. When they are angry, they particularly listen to heavy metal, and when they are sad, rock music occupies the first place.

Rap music represents the adolescents because it gives them the freedom to express their feelings or beliefs more easily through the lyrics and the musical rhythm effectively acts on the brain, on the pace it operates, it is a constraint, it triggers an *irresistible call to obey*.

Classical music and jazz are genres which the adolescents in the test group listen to less. These genres are listened to on their own and less or not at all collectively. The subjects listen to classical music when they have problems and need to put order in their thoughts, because this music has a soothing effect.

By means of the last set of questions, we sought to find out if there were adolescents who had studied or were studying an instrument. Out of the 50 subjects, 9 had studied or were studying an instrument. Thus, 5 children had studied piano for several years on the recommendation of their parents and gave it up because they felt that it became too difficult and the other 5 children played the guitar and were concerned with improving their interpretative technique. They reported that they had learned how to play the guitar because their friends were studying this instrument or wanted to be able to accompany themselves and sing their favourite songs. They frequently associated guitar with their favourite music, rock music.

During the second stage, carried out over 4 days, before each listening activity there was a short presentation of the music pieces heard, under which genres they fall. This was done in order to familiarize the adolescents with the genres, a distinction being constantly made regarding the musical language characteristic to each piece heard. The results are inserted in the following (Fig. 4):

On the first day, the adolescents listened to 5 pieces of pop music, out of which 4 were found among their musical preferences. Out of the 50 subjects, before the listening activity, 37 had a positive emotional state, while 13 had a negative state. After completing the listening activity, 48 subjects said they had a positive emotional state and 2 had a negative state.

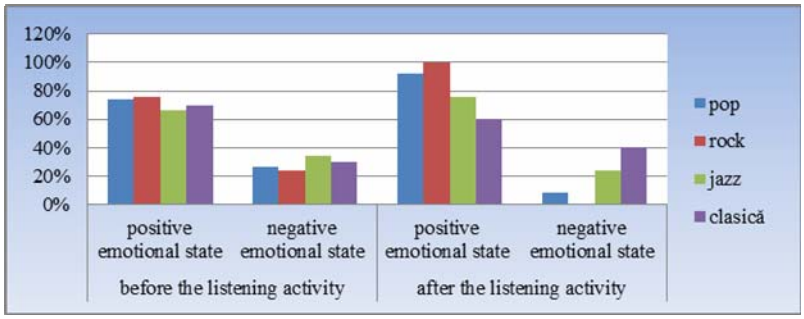

Fig. 4

On the second day, the adolescents listened to 5 pieces of jazz music. Before the listening activity, out of the 50 subjects, 33 were cheerful, and 17 were sad, tired. After completing the listening activity, 38 subjects were cheerful and 12 remained in the same state from before the listening activity.

On the third day, they listened to classical music. Although classical music is not among the preferences of young people, the results prove its influence on their mood: before the listening activity, 35 of the subjects were happy and 15 were sad, tired and after the listening activity, 30 had a positive emotional state, 8 were melancholic and 12 were sad, tired.

On the last day, they listened to rock music. Although 22 children said they were bored, tired or sad, when they learned that they would listen to rock songs, they began to show interest. After listening, all subjects had a positive emotional state.

The texts for the musical genres selected for this study include a variety of themes, from love, longing, friendship, references to sex, drugs, violence, etc. Being interviewed about what attracts them towards a certain song, the subjects said that when listening to music, they were not concerned with analysing the lyrics. When listening to a song, they were first attracted by the melody and the rhythm and then by the lyrics; they listened firstly because it helped them sort out emotions and feelings, it facilitated social interaction, it created wellbeing and happiness.

The feelings triggered by the songs listened to were expressed clearly and once again it demonstrated the beneficial effect of music on the mind. They only mentioned positive states.

8. Conclusions

The relationship between adolescents' emotional states and the kind of music listened to under the supervision of the teacher allowed us to understand the effectiveness of the listening activities conducted under experimental conditions. The assumptions made were confirmed for the experimental group chosen.

Regarding the adolescents' personality, we noticed that they knew how to express their feelings clearly and directly, they were optimistic, remaining, at the

same time, realistic. The modern music they prefer and listen to daily creates the premises of a framework for socializing and communication, leisure, reflection on the daily problems, self-expression or creativity. Pop and rock music are found at the top of adolescents' preferences, probably because these genres allow them, more than others, to get out of the classic patterns, they represent an important topic of discussion and help them socialize and have fun together. Young people do not reject classical music and they even accept and recognize its educational valences.

The most important factors that determine the kind of music they listen to are the mood and the activity carried out at a given time. We noticed that, depending on their emotional state, adolescents select the music they want to listen to because they want to have fun, to relax and do not need introspection. On the other hand, the music they listen to can change their mood.

Although there are numerous studies that make associations between deviant behaviour and the violent attitudes of the young people who listen to heavy metal, the subjects of our study listen to this music especially in order to calm themselves when they are furious or angry.

This research has also some limitations, given by: the small number of participants who took part passively in the evaluation of the emotional states, the repertoire selected for listening was limited to only a few pieces considered representative, possibly not the most representative, the biased answers given by students.

We can conclude that music plays a key role and can influence adolescents' personality development from the aesthetical point of view, it helps them find their identity, socialize, it is essential for their emotional development and for their motivation.

References

Berns, G.S., C.M. Capra, S. Moore, and C. Noussair. „Neural mechanisms of the influence of popularity on adolescent ratings of music." *Neuroimage.* 2010 Feb 1;49(3):2687-2696, Available at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2818406/. Accessed on 25.11.2015

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. *Economia Bunurilor Simbolice.* Bucureşti: Meridiane Publishing House.

Brown, J.D., and P.S. Bobkowski. 2011. "Older and newer media: Patterns of use and effects on adolescents' health and well-being." *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), p. 95- 113.

Cote´, J. 2009. "Identity formation and self development in adolescence". In: R.M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, Volume 1: *Individual bases of adolescent development* (3rd ed., pp. 266– 304). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Dave, Miranda. 2013. *The role of music in adolescent development: much more than the same old song,* in: *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, Volume 18, Issue 1, pag.5-22. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2011.650182. Accessed on 28.11.2015

Dave, Miranda, Michel, Claes. 2009. *Music listening, coping, peer affiliation and depression in adolescence,* in: *Psychology of music*vol. 37 no. 2: 215-233. http://pom.sagepub.com/content/37/2/215.abstract. Accessed on 25.11.2015.

Diaconu, Petru. 2013. *The effect of various types of music on the adolescents' emotional states.* Available at: http://dspace.biblioteca.um.edu.mx/xmlui/bitstream/ handle/

123456789/420/Tesis%20Maestr%C3%ADa%20en%20Educaci%C3%B3n%20de%20Petru%20Diaconu.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed on 15.11.2015.

Elliott, D. J. 2005. *Musical understanding, musical works, and emotional expression*, in: *Implications for education. Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37(1), p. 93-103. Available at: http://philpapers.org/rec/ELLMUM, Accessed on 18.11.2015.

Fitch, W. T. 2006. *The biology and evolution of music: a comparative perspective*. in: Cognition 100, p. 173–215. Available at: http://www.ceacb.ucl.ac.uk/cultureclub/files/CC2006-02-28_Fitch.pdf. Accessed on 18.11.2015.

Gagim, Ion. 2003. *The psychological dimension of music*. Iaşi: Timpul Publishing House.

Gantz, W., H.M. Gartenberg, M.L. Pearson, and S.O. Shiller. 1978. "Gratifications and expectations associated with pop music among adolescents". *Popular Music and Society*, 6, p. 81 – 89.

Kistler, M., K.B. Rodgers, T. Power, E.W. Austin, and L.G. Hill. 2010. "Adolescents and music media: Toward an involvement-mediational model of consumption and self-concept". *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20, p. 616– 630.

Iamandescu, I.B. 2004. *Receptive music therapy, psychological and neurophysiological premises, prophylactic and therapeutic applications.* Bucharest: Infomedica Publishing House.

Levitin, D.L. 2007. *Music, Psychology of*, in: *Darity's International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. Farmington Hills, 2nd Edition, MacMillan Publishing, p. 345-346.

North, A.C., D.J. Hargreaves, and S.A. O'Neill. 2000. "The importance of music to adolescents". *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70.

Opriş, David, and Bianca Macavei. 2007. "The profile of emotional distress; norms for the Romanian population." *Journal of Evidence-Based Psychotherapies*, Vol. VII, no. 2, p. 139-158. Available at: http://jebp.psychotherapy.ro/vol7no2/the-profile-of-emotional-distress-norms-for-the-romanian-population/. Accessed on 29.12.2015.

Peretz I. 2006. "The nature of music from a biological perspective". *Cognition*, 100, p.1-32. Available at: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16487953. Accessed on 30.12.2015.

Roberts, K., J. Dimsdale, P. East, and L. Friedman. 1998. "Adolescent emotional response to music and its relationship to risk-taking behaviours". *Journal of Adolescent Health.* 23(1), 49 – 54. http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(97)00267-X

Roberts, D.F., L. Henriksen, and U.G. Foehr. 2009. *Adolescence, adolescents, and media*. In: R.M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (2009b). *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, Volume 2: *Contextual influences on adolescent development* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Saarikallio, A., and J. Erkkilä. 2007. "The role of music in adolescents' mood regulation." *Psychology of Music*, 35, p. 88 – 109.

Schäfer T., and P. Sedlmeier. 2010. "What makes us like music. Determinants of music preference." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, Vol 4(4), Nov 2010, p. 223-234. http://pom.sagepub.com/content/37/3/279.full.pdf+html. Accessed on 30.12.2015.

Schiopu, Ursula, and Emil Verza. 1997. *The psychology of ages*. Bucharest: Didactică şi Pedagogică Publishing House , third edition, revised.

Tarrant, M., A.C. North, and D.J. Hargreaves. 2000. "English and American adolescents' reasons for listening to music." *Psychology of Music*, 28.

Weinberger, N. M. 2004. "Music and the brain". *Scientific American*, 291(5), p. 88-95. Available at: http://nmw.bio.uci.edu/publications/Weinberger%2c%202004e.pdf. Accessed on 28.11.2015.

Zillmann, D., and S. Gan. 1997. "Musical taste in adolescence". In: J. Hargreaves & A.C. North (Eds.), *The social psychology of music*. New York: Oxford University Press.